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The Sweetest Kiss

Edited by D. L. King

Please note that this extract contains scenes of an adult nature

Midnight at Sheremetyevo

By Remittance Girl

They say that rules are made to be broken, but “they” haven’t met Daniel. He takes rules very seriously because, he insists, they keep us alive. This is something of a problematic statement, but to dwell on technicalities would be a grave mistake. Mistakes get you a month in a four-by-four cell, a hundred feet below the rumbling streets of Mumbai with no air, no light, no food and a great deal of time to think.

Ever since I joined the family, the annual journey to Zürich to arrange our legal and financial affairs has fallen to me. I’m the only one of us left who still loves the cold, the only one who yearns for a nice crisp snowy night. I go because I’m clever with numbers and patient with the men in the suits. Daniel says their plump, moist bankers’ hands make him want to rip their throats out. Most of all, I get to go because I’m the reliable one: Marta the obedient, Marta the sensible; Marta, Daniel’s pet. Usually.

I have twenty-two days left to stew in this infernal hole—a lot of time to contemplate my transgression. Between the occasional visits of hapless cockroaches, I remember the taste of him, the burning flood of his young life as it surged into my mouth. I picture the mothlike fluttering of his pale eyelids just before the end. The haunting, reverberating gasps of his pent-up desire are so loud in my head; sometimes I think

it will drive me insane. But I tell myself the story over and over again, if only to keep my mind off the time.

My February visit to the head office of Credit Suisse had passed with the same gratifying efficiency as always. The family banks there because Daniel knew Auguste Escher, the founder's wife, rather intimately. Both the history and the irony of this escapes me. Still, the stability of the Swiss franc on long-term deposit is nothing to be sniffed at. I dealt, as always, with Herr Rohner. We discussed dispositions and made a few changes to our investment strategy and I finished my business on a beautifully snowy Thursday evening.

There were no direct night flights back to Mumbai, so I settled for what I could get: a late Aeroflot charter with a short transfer in Moscow. I landed at Sheremetyevo International at eleven thirty.

Perhaps it was the marbled, morguelike stillness of the place, or because I hadn't fed for more than three days. Maybe it was the fact that my body clock was so confused from all the traveling, but for some reason, I was feeling a little vulnerable. And he looked so innocent, so scrumptious – like a little lost piece of patisserie – alert and slightly out of place in that huge, cold mausoleum of an airport.

The transit lounge was almost empty. The polished granite hall with its floor-to-ceiling windows looking out onto a dark and frost-carpeted runway was hardly conducive to lounging. Neither were the hard, mean, plastic-molded seats in dull 1970s burnt orange.

At the far end, by the entrance to the washrooms, a trio of corpulent Russian matrons in dusty navy blue uniforms with tarnished brass buttons gossiped percussively. I had met them earlier, looking for directions to the gate. They had bristled and clucked at me indecipherably, making broad shooing gestures with their meaty red hands. Their enormous bosoms had heaved and strained in communal, unfathomable indignation and they had smelled of boiled cabbage. Now they were back at it, discussing something scandalous and noteworthy.

I guessed the boy to be no more than twenty-five. After a few minutes of pacing aimlessly along the line of windows, he took a seat opposite mine in the empty concourse. His silvery, ash-blond hair was cut so short it looked like a mousy velvet cap over his beautifully sculpted head. The dull lights in the ceiling picked up the tips of individual strands, making them shimmer as if he were a sweet Nordic angel. And his lips, full, sensuous and cherubic, were so plump it looked like he had a hard time keeping them closed. He wetted them nervously with an agile pink tongue as he glanced about. People who disdain the flesh have never seen that boy's lips.

Occasionally, unintelligible announcements reverberated around the hollow room from a dilapidated public address system recessed into the vaulted ceiling. When they did, the boy would look up at the speakers, as if he stood a better chance of understanding what was being said by staring at the source of the sound. His long,

sinuous neck stretched upward, showing faint blue veins under his almost translucent skin. The movement accentuated his delicately carved Adam's apple. I toyed with biblical analogies of forbidden fruit before forcing myself to look away.

He gnawed at his lower lip and sucked it petulantly into his mouth. Mine watered and I must have swallowed rather loudly, because he looked at me and offered a nervous smile. I didn't return it. Instead I reminded myself of the rules: no playing away from home base, no damage to civilians, no indulging in risky behavior, and—most of all—no corrupting youth; all the good, sensible rules that kept me safe. That kept us all safe.

He must have felt that I was the only friendly face he was likely to see for the next few hours—not that my face is particularly friendly. Tall and gaunt, alabaster pale and dark haired, I'm not all that approachable. Daniel says I have a classic elegance, but most men look from a distance and give me a wide berth.

But this boy—this silly, silly boy—decided that, at midnight and far from home, I was companionship. He pushed himself lithely out of his seat, leaving his knapsack where it lay, and walked over to me.

"Do you speak English?"

Oh, he was lovely! His coltish frame stood at a polite distance, skittish and fine boned. "Yes, I do."

The boy beamed in triumph and gestured to the seat beside mine. "Do you mind if I sit?"

I glanced from the boy to the seat adjoining mine and back up at him. At that moment I could have done the right thing. I could have—should have—cold-shouldered him, but I didn't. "No. Please do."

As he sat down, I caught scent of him; it was enough to make angels drool: sweet, clean, young skin with a tickle of salt and the tang of a recent bout of masturbation. It was almost unbearable as his shoulder brushed mine. He turned in his seat to face me.

"Where are you going, if I might ask?"

To hell, you foolish boy, I almost replied. "To Mumbai."

He grinned broadly, nodded his head, and pointed to his backpack. "Me too! I go traveling, to see India." Then he tilted his head and appraised me in that overt way that only the painfully young manage to get away with. "But why do you choose to go by Aeroflot? Not such a nice airline but cheap. You do not look like you need to fly cheap."

No. I was stinking rich and old enough to be his great grandmother. "It's the only night flight," I replied, and caught myself staring directly into his eyes. His lashes

were dense dark fringes. The overheads struck them and cast them in lacy shadows against his cheeks.

For a moment he did nothing. Perhaps my eyes had stunned him; they do that sometimes – black rings surrounding indigo and ultramarine irises, shot through with topaz. I blinked to release him.

He blinked back a couple of times and continued with his beautifully accented traveler's banter. "I am from Denmark... and you?"

Oh yes, I could have still been good and decent and kind, but hunger was gnawing at my muscles and the scent of him ate tiny holes through my skin. I was feeling so weak and he was so exquisite. I reached over, placed my hand upon his knee and laughed softly.

"I'm from many places. But now I live in India."

The boy began jabbering away about the subcontinent and all the mysteries it held. He spoke excitedly. He gazed out over the dark runway one moment and then deep into my eyes the next. All that energy flowed through me like clear, crisp water. What would it be like to feel so young again? To see the world with new, eager eyes? My jaw ached. Beneath my tongue the saliva surged and I swallowed it down, along with the guilt that rose like bile in my throat.

His voice grew softer and more fluid. My long, black-stockinged legs caught his attention once, and then again. A faint ring of unspecified longing crept into his voice. His gaze inched up my body, lingering for a while on the gap between the lapels of my black suit jacket – I wore no blouse beneath it. He shifted his shoulders subtly. It was so endearing to watch him try, unobtrusively, to find a more revealing vantage point. Such a tender young adventurer.

That was when I told myself to stop being lax. My flight boarded in less than half an hour and, if I could stay away from him until then, I wouldn't be tempted to do anything stupid. We would both be safe on the plane, surrounded by passengers.

I stood up and shouldered my purse. "Well, I think I will find the ladies' and freshen up before the flight. It was nice to meet you." I smiled down at him with all the benevolence I could manage, quietly bidding farewell to this delicate morsel of youth.

For a moment he looked disappointed and then, without warning, he began babbling. "I like older women, you know? I think they're so sexy. You're very attractive and not so old. But you think I am too young for you, yes?"

Not so old. I had to stifle a laugh. "I know you are," I said, smiling.

Quickly I turned and walked down the length of the hall toward the facilities, forcing myself to concentrate on the sound of my heels clicking and echoing percussively off

the hard, Soviet surfaces. I inhaled deeply, trying to imagine I could smell Lenin's embalmed body, thirty kilometers away, sleeping in his silent tomb.

In the sterile light of the deserted ladies' room, I saw tiny beads of sweat glistening along the line of my upper lip in the mirror. I could hardly breathe, thinking about how close my escape, and his, had been.

"Good girl, Marta," I said to my reflection in the mirror. I praised myself for my forbearance and self-denial, all the while feeling chilled as the heat of my skin slowly dissipated, like my voice, into the silence of the room. The cold water I splashed liberally on my face and neck forced me to catch my breath. It felt good and real – a blessed distraction from the screaming hunger. Blotting away the droplets with a wad of paper towels, I jumped as I heard the door squeal open, and looked back up into the mirror.

In that split second, a surge of rage overwhelmed me. This idiot boy – this piece of sweetmeat – I had spared him and yet there he was, following me, like a lamb to the slaughter.

"I'm not too young." His voice quavered, sounding almost plaintive.

It must have taken him no small amount of courage to follow me in there, and the adrenaline still tainted his muscles, making him shaky. The smell of it seeped through his skin. I turned slowly, leaving his beautiful image forever static in the mirror.

"You have no idea what you're doing, boy. Go away," I whispered harshly, counting the pulses of blood as they hammered against my eardrums.

One, two, three...

"Turn around and walk out, little dove."

Four, five, six...

"Go now. Go!"

Seven, eight, nine...

Too late and far beyond my control, I was on him in a flash, pushing his back against the cold tile wall. The speed frightened him and now the scent of his youth mingled with the sharp, sweet smell of fear.

Waste not, want not.

That's what I thought as I kissed him, falling onto those plump, angelic lips so eager to be kissed. They parted beneath mine like wet, ripe fruit. I ate and I ate, sucking each of them in turn into my mouth, stroking their length with my tongue. Beneath my hips, he came brilliantly alive, his jean-covered cock a desperate hunter-seeker,

blind and straining for a target. If I was going to take what I needed, I could at least give him what he had come looking for first.

I snaked a hand between us – unbuttoning, unzipping and releasing him. Red blossoms of chaotic energy throbbed and died behind my eyelids as I held his cock in my hand. There was so much life there, pushing forward, driving against me mindlessly, helplessly.

He made the most delicious noises, like a baby mammal desperate to find a spare, milked-filled teat. But his hands weren't nearly as innocent. After fumbling with the buttons on my jacket, they grabbed and squeezed feverishly at my breasts, but only long enough to stroke my nipples to erection.

Hot little hands, greedy and impatient, they were off again in search of new territory, traveling downward, along my sides and onto my hips. He pulled them and ground himself savagely against them, trapping my hand between us.

Desire flooded from his pores so thick and pungent that the essence of it almost choked me. I pulled my lips away to see his eyes, half closed. His head tilted back against the wall. He was panting frantically as he grappled for handfuls of my skirt and rucked it up between us.

"God!" he cried out, turning me, pressing me to the wall. "I want to fuck you, now..."

"Of course you do," I murmured soothingly, raising one leg to wrap it around his hips. "Come on, then." My hand, still full of his burning desire, guided his cockhead to my entrance – impatient, hungry, and wet.

He thrust up and in fluidly. The look on his face was heart-breaking as he entered; so much ecstasy in a fraction of a moment held him static. I smiled and watched, knowing that pleasure had blinded him.

"Is this what you wanted?"

He whimpered once and began to fuck slowly and with intensity. His cock felt unbearably sweet, filling me with each plunge, growing thicker as he pushed deeper.

"Oh, god..." he cried again.

His body began to shudder after only a few thrusts. He was so sweet, so gratifyingly enthusiastic; it was impossible not to forgive him for his unseemly lack of endurance. So sad that he would never get the chance to learn to last a little longer. In my arms, the boy's frame shook hard and he drove faster, pumping himself into my heat and toward his final release.

I cupped the back of his neck with my fingers and pulled his head onto my shoulder. His skin was pale and velvet smooth. A sinuous river of life pulsed hypnotically

beneath the surface. It spoke to me like the snake in the tree, as it always does. Taste this and know me, it hissed.

As he began to orgasm, I bit down into that beautiful valley of flesh at the side of his throat. He jerked as I punctured through to the artery, giving one last thrust and erupting hot and thick inside of me. As I absorbed him into my bloodstream, I could taste the echo of his seed, musky and bitter, just before the coppery flavor of his blood overwashed it.

I almost fainted with pleasure. Sweet youth distilled and vibrant concentrated energy flooded through me in hot, twin fountains. I hardly noticed he was crying out then, his muscles convulsing as he came and came and began to die.

The room was shaded against the early morning light. The air smelled dry and dusty. Daniel was lying stretched out on his wicker divan, fanning himself lazily. He looked at me through the gloom. I hated him like this – in his self-satisfied, grand poobah incarnation. But I also felt acutely defensive and shifted my weight from foot to foot as I gave him a rundown of how the trip had gone.

“So you switched all the bonds?”

“Of course. Rohner agreed that it was a wise move,” I said, distracted. There was no escaping it, no avoiding it.

I took a big breath and, with some trepidation, told him what happened at the airport.

“Marta, you know better than that!” Daniel growled, raising himself up in indignation. His anger was palpable. The cat, which had been sleeping by his feet, jumped down and fled in fear.

Katerina and Benedict, who’d been playing draughts and only half listening, both sat up and stared at me. If my confession had rendered any of them speechless at first, they certainly all found their voices eventually. I listened to a barrage of accusations.

“I know, I know...” I said softly, attempting to placate them. “You have every right to be infuriated. I know the rules. They’re good rules. I just...I couldn’t help myself.”

“This sort of shit brings trouble down on all of us, Marta,” yelled Daniel, getting to his feet. He stopped about five paces from where I stood and glared at me in disgust. “I thought you looked too damn pink for having spent fourteen hours in transit.”

I offered him an apologetic grin and back-stepped a little. Daniel was not particularly violent but he didn’t take kindly to any member of his brood breaking the house rules. You don’t live for three hundred years and let people trample all over you. I could see he was trying to control his temper. The others in the room snickered.

Drawing his hands over his lean, handsome face and threading them through his silky black hair, Daniel sighed. There were tiny lines at the corners of his eyes and small creases in his cheeks. He hadn't fed in a while. I was sure he would have taken the boy himself had he had the chance. Finally, he settled his hands on his hips.

"Why couldn't you have just waited till Mumbai, Marta? It's not as if you're a newborn. You're not without stamina or self-control. You know what the punishment for a breach like this is."

"I tried to avoid him, Daniel, I swear. I really, really did. But he came begging for it. He followed me, for god's sake! I'm not that strong. No one is. If you could have seen him, you'd be a little more understanding! He was irresistible, Daniel..."

"Tell me you cleaned up properly, Marta. Just tell me that," he said, with a low, measured voice, leveling his gaze at me.

"Well, in a sense, yes."

Daniel's hand flew out and grabbed my throat. "What the fuck does that mean?" He yanked me toward him, his face only inches from mine.

"Well, actually...he's outside in the hall," I wheezed.

"You irresponsible bitch!" The final consonant sprayed my face with his saliva. "You turned him?"

I was shaking and trying to breathe shallowly through my compressed windpipe. None of us actually need to breathe, but it feels terribly uncomfortable not to. "Just...just wait till you meet him before you murder me, okay?"

I could feel his temper; his breath was quick and hot against my face. Then, as if too disgusted to bear the closeness, he pushed me away, hard, and sent me stumbling backward. I fought to keep my balance but my heels wobbled and turned, taking me down.

He stalked away, fuming.

"I'm sorry, Daniel. I really am," I said quietly, struggling back to my feet, dusting my skirt down. I walked to the door. "Just wait till you see him."

Opening the double doors, I poked my head into the hall. "Come in and meet the family."

The boy sauntered in, more graceful now than he had ever been in life. My dead heart fluttered when I thought of how I might have simply drained him and left him on the cold floor of the bathroom at Sheremetyevo. No—he was too precious, too beautiful, and besides, someone needed to teach him how to fuck properly.

I drew him farther into the darkened room. "Stefan? This is Daniel."

The boy smiled shyly before trying to cover it with the bravado of the young. "Hi. Hey, this is so cool!"

Daniel gave the boy a curt nod, but I could see the look of appreciation in his eyes. Katerina got up and came forward, wrapping a lithe arm around the new arrival's shoulders. "Oh, Marta. He's just adorable."

Before I could wipe the smug smile off my face, Daniel looked at me again. "You know the rules, Marta. Down to the hole. Now."

"The hole? Please Daniel, not the hole."

"Yes, the fucking hole. A month."

"A whole month?" I said. The thought of the endless hours of nothingness terrified me. "Couldn't you find it in your heart to go a little easy on me this time? I mean...look at him!"

Daniel's jaw was set hard. He wasn't going to change his mind. Rules were rules. "Thirty days," he said. "I hope he was worth it."

I nod into the hot, damp darkness and shift a little. The bones of my spine bite into my flesh as I lean back against the rough wall of the tiny cell. My skin feels so parched, I imagine I can hear it cracking as I move. In the span of my lifetime, twenty-two days is not so long, and I endure it by remembering the taste of his youth.